

HATE/CODE

Introduction

This paper examines Jean Baudrillard's concept of the Code and applies it, briefly, to the urgent issues of hatred and violence. Baudrillard's little-known notion of the "the hate" is explored in detail and the psychoanalytic terminology re-deployed in his work on hatred is clarified. Though Baudrillard never explicitly linked his notion of the Code to hatred, an argument is made that these concepts are closely related and that, placed in conjunction, they offer new and compelling ways of thinking about both hatred and its alternatives. This paper provides the theoretical groundwork to such an analysis; subsequent work will attempt a 'radical empiricist' exploration of hatred through case studies.

Finally the figure of the Other and radical alterity, frequently evoked by Baudrillard, is central to my closing suggestion that radical alterity provides an alternative to, or protection from, the hate.

The Code

Baudrillard's concept of the Code was clearly influenced by the development of Structuralist semiotics, including Lacan's reading of Saussure which yielded the important notions of the "Saussurian bar" and the "primacy" of the signifier (Lacan 1966/2007). A less overt, but perhaps more telling, influence on Baudrillard was Nietzsche's attack on the metaphysical foundations of western rationalism. Of

particular importance to Baudrillard's later work is Nietzsche's contrasting of being and becoming and his contention that modern individuals are imprisoned by a system of rationality, indebtedness and "oppressive narrowness" in which "man impatiently ripped himself apart" (Nietzsche 1887/1994, n. 16). Nietzsche suggests a process of 'internalisation' has taken place such that individuals are produced, and produce themselves, through a moral condemnation of their immediate condition. The vitality and simple assertion of doing and becoming are gradually replaced by a spirit of calculation, self-reflection, resentment, and ultimately, nihilism. Cut off from the immediacy of becoming we grow to resent ourselves and our position in society. We blame our limitations on others who we come to hate, as we hate ourselves. This broad-brush but potent cultural psychology, developed by Nietzsche, influenced many thinkers – Max Weber and Sigmund Freud are only two of the most obvious examples. Yet Baudrillard's relationship to this tradition of thought has not been explored, as a result many aspects of his work are poorly understood. Baudrillard's concept of the Code can be seen as a distinctive re-working of this notion of a system of "oppressive narrowness" and internalisation. The Code is able to present itself as a realm of freedom, justice and equality while it models, defines and contrasts 'individuals' through their positioning on a hierarchical scale: not an iron cage but a virtual one.

In *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign* (1981) Baudrillard began to describe various codes of meaning (or signification) as integrated by what he called 'the code' (le code, la grille, le Code du signes, la matrice). By "the code" Baudrillard intended not particular codes of meaning (English, French, Morse) or particular modes of the interpretation of meaning (dominant, resistant, plural) but rather *the condition of possibility of all coding*¹. The notion of the Code is then a critical concept, not an

empirical one. For a genuine critique of the consumer society to be made, Baudrillard's early work suggests, we must focus analysis on the form of the Code, not its contents or representations. The Code *as form* is preconscious, or, in Baudrillard's terminology "precessional"; that is, as grid or network it *precedes* individual experience, perception, choice. The medium of this grid is the abstract, arbitrary sign. Signs, visual and linguistic, are *the* medium of coding, of the ordered exchange between coded elements. Composed to two sets of inter-locking relations, the sign-referent and signifier-signified, the sign is the universal form constructing the oppositions of subject and object, of real and representation, of self and other: the building blocks of 'reality' itself.

The ordered exchange of signs produces identity and difference: every 'thing' is semiotic; every 'thing' is a 'thing' because it is not some other 'thing'. Baudrillard calls this the "logic of equivalence". Signs produce social meanings and values on a scale or grid whereby all points can be compared, contrasted and exchanged. To clarify, it is not that every 'thing' can be converted into sign form, it rather that the very process of transcription or coding produces 'things', essences, identities and differences ². Though the Code encompasses every 'thing' it cannot process ambivalence (or becoming) as these are not 'things' with identity but relations, always "in transit" or metamorphosis.

The Code then does not merely express particular aspects of the consumer capitalist system such as media, fashion or advertising: it is far more fundamental. At the fundamental level the Code is what prevents symbolic exchange by breaking its cycles or by seizing and diverting its potential. Symbolic exchange, as relation of ambivalence and becoming, is not a 'thing', it has no identity (and strictly speaking no 'definition')

either) it occurs or rather “effracts” only when the Code is annulled, reversed or suspended. Symbolic exchange traverses all oppositions, it is neither one thing nor another, it prevents the emergence of fixed or stable positions or power relations. The most common example of symbolic exchange is the gift. The meaning of the act of giving a gift, in the consumer society as much as the tribal societies interpreted by Mauss (1990), is in no sense reducible to the object given, it depends on if and how it is accepted. The giving, receiving and reciprocating of gifts are intensely volatile relations, the meaning of the gift never settles into fixity or identity. The meaning of the gift can be transformed at any moment in the on-going relation between parties; indeed this relation is *of* the gift and the gift is *of* this relation: relation and gift flourish together, and die together. Baudrillard was particularly interested in the moment of the “counter-gift” (contre don), that is the refusal of the gift or its return with interest to the giver in a kind of status war (the latter often referred to, rather imprecisely, as “potlatch” (1993: 125-194).

Baudrillard defines the Code as the “structural law of value”; a “generalised metaphysics” synthesising social values, social production, social identities. His early emphasis was the Code’s “obligatory registration of individuals on the scale of status” (1981: 68). The Code produces a “hierarchy of differential signs” and, crucially, “constitutes the fundamental, decisive form of social control – more so than acquiescence to ideological norms” (ibid.). It makes no difference whether we, as individuals, endorse the consumer capitalist system or not, since we are all positioned by the Code, and are positioned through it by others. We all know the value of a professional career, an elite education or a cute butt *whether we like it or not*. Further

each of these ‘sign-values’ are classifiable and comparable through the sign’s logic of equivalence: traditionally wealthy businessmen trade on their financial wealth to offset their ailing physique and secure the affections of a younger and more physically attractive partner, that businesswomen now do the same only demonstrates the universalisation of the Code’s sign system.

The Code breaks, blocks and bars ambivalence and in the barring produces equivalence – the regulated play of identity and difference characterised by oppositions such as true/false, good/evil, self/other, male/female. The standard dimensions of consumer status positioning flow from this source: rich/poor, young/old, fat/thin, attractive/unattractive. Binary oppositions are central features of Baudrillard’s first and second orders of the sign (or “orders of simulacra”). The third order, of the Code proper, simulates choice, difference, freedom and diversity by allowing the privileged term to switch, fuse or “implode” (1983: 95-110). For example ‘fat’, ‘poor’ and ‘old’ can be beautiful too – if only within the confines of fashion and cosmetics advertising or pop music video. The Code operates in “total indifference” to content; everything is permitted in sign form, that is as “simulation”.

In his early studies, *The Object System* and *The Consumer Society* Baudrillard depicts the Code as performing a *pacifying effect* on society; it soothes away once clear-cut, binary divisions of class and status by registering all people as individual consumers on a single universal scale. Everyone becomes a consumer, though some, of course, consume far more than others. As universal form the status of consumer confers a kind of democratic flattening of social relations: but an illusory one. If class conflict was, to

some extent, pacified, Baudrillard did not contend that other forms of violence and dissent would be deterred by the Code. Indeed he wrote of the emergence of new “anomalous” forms of violence, less intelligible, less structured, not binary but post-dialectical (Baudrillard 1998: 174-185). He later proposed the term “disembodied hate” or simply “the hate” to express aspects of this process (1996: 142-147). The later sections of the paper explore “the hate” in some detail.

Defying the Code

The Code then is a principle of integration producing *everything and everyone as a position on the scale of social value*. With the last vestiges of symbolic orders around the world being eliminated by neo-liberal globalisation how is the Code to be challenged or defied? ³

Departing from the form but not the intent of Marxist theory, Baudrillard argued that the apparent distinction between use value and economic exchange value is produced as a “code effect”. In other words use value is a simulacrum produced by the capitalist system as justification and grounding for its trading of economic exchange values (1981: 130-142). For Baudrillard the illusion of use value, like the illusion of signified meaning and the illusion of the stable solid reality of the referent, are produced by the Code as structural groundings, shoring up the unstable ‘reality’ of signs and preventing the emergence of ambivalence (1981: 156 n.9). To challenge, defy or breach the Code then it is not sufficient to ‘return’ to use value. Indeed such strategies, shared by some Marxists, environmentalists and anti-globalisation movements *feed* the capitalist

system, the market's semiotic assimilation of environmentalism as the 'green' brand choice is an obvious example.

But if Marxist theory fails to engage with and challenge the system of signs, so too, for Baudrillard, do many Structuralist, Poststructuralist and Postmodernist theorists of desire, difference and liberation. To defy the system it is never sufficient to 'play with signs', that is to play with plural, 'different' or multiple identity positions. Here we encounter Baudrillard's total rejection of what would later be called 'identity politics' and also a central misunderstanding of his position on signs⁴. For Baudrillard to play with signs – signs of consumption and status, signs of gender, sexuality or ethnicity *is simply to operate within the Code*. It is an unconscious or unwitting complicity with the Code's logic of the multiplication of status positions, it is to assist it in the production of 'diversity' and 'choice'. It is deeply ironic that many of Baudrillard's critics have claimed, or assumed, that Baudrillard himself merely 'played with signs' and that through his notion of seduction he advocated a playing with signs. Yet Baudrillard is clear, in order to oppose the system "[e]ven signs must burn" (1981: 163). Crucially his controversial work *Seduction* (1979/1990) does *not* advocate a playing with signs. In it Baudrillard draws an important distinction between the "ludique" meaning playing the game of signs, playing with signification (to enhance one's status position or to assert one's identity through its 'difference'), and "enjeux" meaning to put signs at stake, to challenging them or annul them through symbolic exchange (1990: 157-178)⁵. For Baudrillard signs play with us, despite us, against us, limiting and defining us. Any radical defiance must be a defiance of signs and their coding within the sign system.

Unfortunately the distinction between ‘playing with signs’ – playing with their decoding and recoding, and *defying* the sign system has not penetrated the mainstream of Media and Cultural Studies. Eco’s influential notion of “semiotic guerrilla warfare” (Eco 1967/1995) and Hall’s even more influential notion of “resistant decoding” place their faith in the sovereign, rational consumer to negotiate mediated meanings. For them the consumer citizen confronts media content as the subject confronts the object. Hall does not consider that much media content is ‘encoded’ in an ‘oppositional’ form which renders the moment of ‘oppositional decoding’ one of conformity (see Hall et al 1973/2002: 128-138). Examples would include much ‘youth’ advertising, Channel Four (UK) documentaries on poverty, third-world debt and racism and specialist programming slots for ‘minorities’ such as Sharia TV. In other words the terms for ‘resistant’ readings are pre-set as positions within the Code where resistance is already reduced to sign regime. From VO5 ‘punk’ hair to leftist and feminist identity politics – try them if you like, no-one cares one way or the other. Critique is rendered meaningless by coded assimilation because the system sells us the signs of opposition as willingly as it sells us the signs of conformity. Can we even tell them apart? In which category would we place *Sex and the City*, for example?⁶

The realm of symbolic exchange or seduction does not come about when individuals ‘play with signs’ but when (signs of) individuality, identity, will and agency are annulled through an encounter with the radically Other. Radical otherness, or radical alterity, for Baudrillard, refers to the Other beyond representation, beyond all coding. Not only beyond consumer status position but also beyond performative, ‘oppositional’ or “ludique” de/re-codings.

The Code as system of “total constraint” then does not merely produce similarity and identity but also difference, diversity and hybridity. It does not seek to promote passivity or apathy among consumers but quite the contrary: to thrive and expand the system requires active, discriminating, engaged consumers, jostling for position, competing for advancement. The Code exists “to better prime the aspiration towards the higher level” (1981: 60). The Code delivers diversity and choice at the level of sign content (the goods that we choose to eat, the products and services that we choose to wear, watch, download) and requires in return ... nothing much at all: merely that *we understand ourselves as consumers*. Consumption is not, of course, a homogenising process but a diversifying one. The aim of the system is to make ‘the consumer’ the universal form of humanity but within this form an almost infinite variety of differential contents or positions are possible. Since ‘humanity’, for Baudrillard, as for Nietzsche, is already constituted as a universal form by the Enlightenment (1993: 50) this task is close to completion, though the final completion, the “perfect crime” against Otherness will never, according to Baudrillard, come to pass (Baudrillard 1996)⁷. To summarise: the Code has a pacifying effect on society by promoting a largely agreeable universal – the free consumer, spoilt for choice, and it provides clearly *sign-posted* routes for advancement as well as constant reminders as to what could happen if we don’t play the game (of signs).

As a term the Code largely disappeared from Baudrillard’s writings after *Simulacra and Simulation* (1981/1994). Are we to take it that the Code is still operational in the “fourth order” or is it defunct? We can answer this question by recalling two important

points. Firstly, Baudrillard did not contend that the pacification and control effected by the Code would be total (quite the reverse, see Baudrillard 1996:142-9; 1998: 174-185), only that the Code aimed at total constraint. Baudrillard's most developed example, the masses, let us recall, are not so passive and docile that they are manipulated by the system; rather, they withdraw into silence or practice a hyper-conformity without belief in, or commitment to, the integrated system of values (1978/1983). In other words they refuse to be the active, discriminating, reflective consumers that the system requires. Moreover Baudrillard writes "We form a mass, living most of the time in panic or haphazardly (*aleatoire*) above and beyond any meaning" (1978: 16/1983: 15). The masses, for Baudrillard, are clearly not only the poor and marginal, they are "us, you and everyone" (*nous, vous, tout le monde*) (1978: 51/1983: 46). That is everyone, as posited by the Code, *is mass*. We are all both inside and, at the same time, outside or beyond the Code: we are all mass, and yet we are all singularities.

Secondly, in the late 1980s when Baudrillard proposed a fourth order, a fractal stage with "no point of reference", where "value radiates in all directions" as a "haphazard proliferation" (1993: 11) he was clear that the previous orders continue to function alongside the fourth order. In other words, there are still dialectical tensions operating, associated with the second order, and the sign code of the third order also flourishes. Indeed what is most distinctive about the fourth order is that: "things continue to function long after their ideas have disappeared, and they do so in total indifference to their content. The paradoxical fact is that they function even better under these circumstances" (1993: 6). The idea or principle of the Code then is dead, but it functions even more effectively than ever, it becomes virtual, it produces "integral

reality” as the complete and final replacement for the world as symbolic form (2005a: 17-24).

The Hate

“Hatred is undoubtedly something which outlives any definable object, and feeds on the disappearance of that object” (Baudrillard 1995/1996: 145).

What then is the relationship between the Code and violence and hatred? The Code, it seems, both pacifies and produces hate: indeed *it produces hatred through pacification*. The Code integrates as it differentiates, it culturates and multi-culturates. Baudrillard acknowledged that consumer capitalism had, partially, achieved a pacifying or ameliorative effect on ‘structural’ hatred such as the racism of biology or skin colour. However, the system, through its compulsory registration of all within the Code, generates, according to Baudrillard, new hatreds and new violence that cannot be ‘treated’ by socialisation, education and information. On racism specifically Baudrillard argues:

Logically it [racism] ought to have declined with progress and the spread of Enlightenment. But the more we learn how unfounded the genetic theory of race is, the more racism intensifies. This is because we are dealing with an artificial construction of the Other, on the basis of an erosion of the singularity of cultures (Baudrillard 2002a: 55)

If the dialectical violence of difference (self v. other) is ameliorated, the post-dialectical violence of indifference seems to grow in intensity. The violence of in-difference or “the hate” is a viral form and like a hospital ‘superbug’ it cannot be treated by the standard measures and cures *because the over-use of those very measures produced it* (Baudrillard 1996: 142-147; 2005: 141-155). The Code’s vast edifice of signs diversifies and assimilates producing ‘positive’ representations at the same time as the divide, both economic and cultural, between rich and poor deepens and ramifies. The richer get richer and the poor get humiliated. For Baudrillard the edifice of signs actually “deters”, prevents or displaces the possibility of genuine social progress by delivering “simulated” social progress: signs of inclusion, signs of empowerment. Further the masses (everyone, “nous, vous, tout le monde”) reject, ultimately, the system of signs; we become increasingly indifferent to it, disengaged from its prescriptions. The hate cannot be treated by the use of signs because the over-use of signs produced it.

The hate, as Baudrillard figures it, cannot be broken down and understood through the binary or dialectical categories of self and other, black and white, inside and outside, us and them. The hate does not emanate from a recognisable position: a self, ideology or culture, nor does it emerge from the self, ideology or culture of the other. The verb ‘to hate’, like the self or ego has become autonomous: uprooted it flows and seeps crossing any boundary, any limit (Baudrillard 2005c: 141). The hate flows, is networked, travels at the speed of information; it has not one object or target but all and any. Because it is not, primarily, hatred of something or someone, it is not reflective or critical nor does it propose alternatives. Having no definite object, goal or purpose, no programme or

ideology, the Hate is a particularly intractable and corrosive form of hatred. According to Baudrillard it devours the social relation: “it is certainly the end of the social” (Baudrillard 1996: 146).

Baudrillard’s major example is terrorism which he discussed many times during his career. Terrorism, he asserts, does not oppose a state or ideology, still less proposes alternatives: terrorism *refuses* meaning, it aims at the social Code itself, it is “senseless and indeterminate, like the system it combats” (1983: 51). I have discussed terrorism elsewhere (Pawlett 2007: 133-149) and would like to offer alternative examples here. If we take the violent protests by some Muslim groups provoked by the Danish newspaper, *Jyllands-Posten*, publishing cartoons of the prophet Mohammed – what precisely was the object of the protester’s hate? It was not a particular newspaper, it was not the Danish state or people, it was, perhaps, not even ‘The West’ as such, it was the dominance of a system of representation that recognises no outside, no sacred, no ‘beyond’; that reduces all meanings, beliefs and sensations to sign fodder.⁸

To offer other empirical cases, recent examples of the ‘serial killer’ in the UK include Levi Bellfield who hated and murdered the sign-type ‘blondes’ and Steve Wright who murdered the sign-type ‘prostitute’. Yet, moving away from such extreme behaviour into the quotidian, the middle classes hate and fear the sign-types ‘hoodie’ or the baseball-capped ‘chav’. The BNP hate the sign-type ‘Muslim’ though, increasingly ‘tolerate’ the Hindu or Sikh. But tolerance is always useless, always strategic and is generally indistinguishable from indifference.

What Baudrillard's position suggests is that we do not hate the Other – the radically Other, we merely hate *the other* – as transcribed and signified through the Code. The Code reduces the radically Other to the “dangerously similar”: dangerously similar because they differ only in sign content or position (Baudrillard 1993: 124-138). In our superficial or unwitting acceptance of the Code we hate (and ‘we’ do all hate) the other *as sign*, as merely a signified ‘reality’. We encounter an other who is no more than the ‘reality’ of their signification; at best we are indifferent to the other and tolerate them. Indeed we cannot *but* be indifferent to the other because it is through indifference that, socially, we tolerate. But Baudrillard's position is not one of despair, nor, clearly, is it an elitist rejection of the masses and their behaviour. As mass we also defy the system, our acceptance is only ever partial and superficial. Transcription always fails, or else we fail the demands of transcription: in failing we defy and re-open the space of ambivalence (Baudrillard 1981: 205-10).

In sum, the Code feeds “the hate” by replacing the potential for symbolic relations between people – the ambivalence of reciprocal exchange – with an insertion or transcription into the terms of the Code. Thus transcribed an individual person is merely a conglomeration of signs which fabricate their ‘reality’ – and if this is what we are reduced to, why wouldn't we hate each other?

Acting-out

Here I want to examine a specific feature of Baudrillard's approach to the issue of agency and violence. It has been claimed that Baudrillard has no theory of agency and

that this constitutes a fundamental weakness in his work (Kellner 1989: 216).

Baudrillard position was that the illusion of agency was an effect of the Code, and a powerful one. Yet even as we are transcribed into the terms of the Code we remain singularities in radical ambivalence – hence Baudrillard did not reduce embodied experience to an effect of language. Within the Code there is no meaningful agency or resistance in the conventional sense, but there are, Baudrillard insisted, other forms of agency. One which his later work developed was “acting-out”. Within the Code we are not merely ‘internalised’ as the work of Nietzsche, Weber and others suggests. For Baudrillard we are now in a new phase where the inner-directed self must compare, contrast and differentiate themselves in relation to others in term of coded positions on a hierarchical scale.

The Code generates, according to Baudrillard, a state of “annoyed indifference”. Yet indifference may suddenly, inexplicably, accelerate into a violent “acting-out” – that is into ‘real’ acts of violence. Baudrillard’s use of the Freudian term “acting-out” (*Agieren*) requires some clarification. In fact Baudrillard used a number of terms which bear the stamp of Freud and Lacan throughout his career: real, symbolic and imaginary, seduction, abreaction, transference and counter-transference, though curiously these have not attracted the attention of most critics and commentators. In contrast, Mike Gane has suggested that Baudrillard’s ideas concerning symbolic exchange can be understood as his ‘version’ of the Freudian Unconscious. For Freud the notion of ‘acting-out’ concerns repressed memories of past events which return by expressing themselves in actions that the actor ‘responsible’ cannot understand and which appear irrational or ‘out of character’ (Freud 1920/1991). For Lacan acting-out occurs when

the capitalised or 'big' Other (which I will define simply as the Code at this stage, but see below on 'radical alterity') refuses to listen to the subject or rules out in advance any recognition of the subject's desires or hopes⁹. In acting-out the humiliated subject unconsciously or unwittingly expresses a message to society: *you will listen, you will take notice*. However neither the 'agent' of this acting-out, nor society at large, comprehend this failed act of communication. Baudrillard adapts the Lacanian sense of the term and it becomes vital to his later work on hatred, violence and terrorism.

Acting-out, for Baudrillard, may well be incomprehensible to the people involved and to society's official discourses of criminology and criminal justice, but it is far from meaningless. We are all humiliated by the Code, by transcription and transparency, by competition and anxiety but some are humiliated far more than others. We cannot oppose anything so nebulous, evanescent, so abstract as the Code but acts of violence, defiance and hatred become as nebulous, as formless, as ubiquitous as the Code. Hatred and violence are destructured, become less and less comprehensible through the well-worn categories of self and other. Indeed hatred "outlives any definable object and feeds on the disappearance of that object" (1996: 145). The "absent other of hatred" can be literally anybody at anytime. We might hate someone for their religion or 'culture', or for their music collection or hairstyle, we might even kill someone for the way they looked at us. To cite other recent cases in the UK: a 'Chav' kills a 'Goth' because the Goth was "different". Yet, the difference involved is merely a semiotic difference *from* the Chav¹⁰. Not a relation of radical difference or alterity but, as Baudrillard terms it a "dangerous similarity": Chavs wear white, Goths wear black. Both are popular cultural youth styles, both exist for the other as differential sign

display, each positions the other as the other positions them. But, according to Baudrillard, the Goth is not the Chav's object of hate. The hate is sudden, eruptive "acting-out", it evaporates as suddenly as it flared.

We can find support for Baudrillard's ideas in academic criminology. Kenneth Polk (1994) presents a number of fascinating case studies of "male confrontational homicide" and emphasises both the similarity, in terms of age, class and income (as well as gender) of victims and aggressors, and the sudden evaporation of hostility after the event. Typically young males arrested for fatal attacks on their peers do express remorse, as well as disbelief, and, according to Polk, a curious sense of being unable to define or locate any reason for hostility. After the event comments such as "he seemed a decent bloke" are apparently common, the protagonists recalling no dislike and unable to offer any rationalisation to the police (Polk 1994: 111).

For Baudrillard acting-out as failed communication, where communication is impossible, is not, fundamentally, a cry of the dispossessed or impoverished. It is rather a response of the relatively affluent, of those on the 'right' side of the global divide, it is a communication that says 'Be other', it is "a desperate form of the production of the other" (2005c: 147). But this is still the lower case other, the other of the Code, not the Other of radical alterity. We do not hate the Other, the Other in their unfathomable singularity, we suffer from an object-less hate, a vague sense of unfulfillment and ennui that in acting-out we project at anyone who can function, however momentarily, as our other, our enemy. In such a situation it is an 'other' not the Other that is hated; indeed any 'other' will do.

Radical Alterity

Never question others about their identity...[t]here is no such thing as oneself, nor is there any call for such a thing: everything comes from the Other
(Baudrillard 1993: 142&148)

Baudrillard's position was not one of despair; it is not without hope. The Code is not total; it merely aims at totality. Though we may act as though we believe in the system, ultimately we do not. Baudrillard wrote "I am not a pessimist ... singularity (or radical otherness) is indestructible" (2005). There is always a "principle of secret disaffection" (1996: 142) against the system, disaffection is felt by all, despite their relative position in the hierarchy of the Code. The absorption, integration and channelling of all negative elements by the Code inevitably gives rise to "violent, virulent, destabilising abreactions" (ibid.). In this, as in much else, Baudrillard's position did not change, remaining consistent from the writing of *The Consumer Society* in the late 1960s right through to *The Intelligence of Evil* (2005a) and late essays such as *The Pyres of Autumn* (2005).

We hate the other as sign, as signifying regime which allows us, momentarily, to act-out our frustrations through them. As we hate the other as sign, we must, as Baudrillard demanded, "burn signs" (1981: 163). If we acknowledge that the Code humiliates us all, some far more than others, and that humiliated people will, occasionally and not in

any predictable way, act-out to communicate disaffection and defiance we must not play the game of signs, we must not play with the humiliation of the other through signs.

Because of the violence of the Code as system of assimilation and absorption, violent 'acting-out' is always, for Baudrillard, a counter-offensive or counter-gift. This process does not take place at the conscious, rational, goal-directed level of the Liberal subject: it is an "abreaction", a rising to the surface of a 'repressed', ingrained violence – our positioning by the Code. We are all humiliated by the Code; we are all rubbished and "ripped apart" by it.

How do we defy the Code? We might begin with counter-violence: a counter-gift or "subtraction" directed against our-'self' as constituted by the Code. Not self-hatred or resentment but defiance of the Code's violent construction of our 'identity' as signified and defined through the "ludique" game of signs.

We allow the other to become Other, singular, non-identical. We do not place or define ourselves or others. We do not reduce the other to a 'reality' – neither what we imagine to be a positive, endorsing, empowering 'reality' or to a negative, stereotyped 'reality'. To reduce the other to a 'reality' in order to confer them rights and representation is, for the *conferrer*, a form of control and limitation over the *conferee*. Yet this form of control is never stable or complete, the recipient of rights or entitlements may not believe in them as the system does. To be in the Code is to be able to defy the Code, and, according to Baudrillard, behind our superficial acceptance of the system we do, in any case, practice a poetics of "distance". A "distance" not from the Other, but from

ourselves: a distance that recovers proximity to the Other (Baudrillard 2001: 45-50, 70-73).

We might look for the singularity of the Other, and for oneself as Other, as radical alterity, as ambivalence and “secret” that cannot be incorporated by the system because it cannot be read, understood or positioned. To experience self and other as CODE is the vital precondition to individualise, commodify and hate. Without a self the other cannot be the same and without self or other there is little scope for hate. Do not fight over signs: fight the sign system.

Notes

- 1) To draw attention to this distinction I prefer to capitalise, referring to The Code or simply Code, and, with a degree of indulgence, Hate/Code.
- 2) Crucially ambivalence and equivalence are *not* themselves binary oppositions because binary oppositions operate only within the coded order of equivalence.
- 3) From his early writings for the dissident journal *Utopie* through to his neglected work *Seduction* this was the fundamental goal of Baudrillard's writings. On globalisation it might be objected that neo-liberalism, at least in its more sharing, caring variants, has actually preserved and protected what little remains of symbolic or traditional societies. But this was precisely Baudrillard's point. Where, in earlier phases of capitalist expansion, there was violence destruction of otherness, increasingly (though not uniformly) the other is treated as precious commodity to be nurtured, or as the recipient of 'humanitarian' intervention. The other is preserved, no longer as living culture but as sign or emblem of global diversity and heritage, as favoured resource for Western eco-tourists (the implosion of ecology and tourism) seeking the exotic, and for gap-year students (the implosion of education and leisure) aiming to enhance their CVs.
- 4) Grace (2000) was both correct and prescient in her discussion of the radical difference between Baudrillard's position on signs and seduction and the 'performative' and nomadic 'recodings' promoted by feminists scholars such as Braidotti and Butler.
- 5) For example the relationship of 'play' to the Code and its models is clear in the following: "Le ludique, c'est le 'jeu' de cette demande et du modèle. La demande n'étant que réponse à la sollicitation du modèle, et le précession des modèles absolue, tout défi y est impossible" (Baudrillard 1979: 216) – "The 'ludic' is formed of the 'play' of the model with demand. But given that the demand is prompted by the model, and the model's precession is absolute, challenges are impossible". (Baudrillard 1990: 157). While Baudrillard's term for the stakes of symbolic exchange is "enjeux que symboliques" (1976: 67).
- 6) Hall himself seems to anticipate the failure of his notion of a resistant or "oppositional code" when he contrasts the local and situated character of negotiated readings with the "global" nature of the oppositional code. Perhaps then it is precisely because critique, as Hall defines it, can only come about through grand or global narratives that it has failed. Within the Code there are only negotiated readings.
- 7) Baudrillard defines the "perfect crime" as the total destruction of otherness, "the reign of the same" (Baudrillard 2003: 63).
- 8) Žižek (2008) discusses the issue of the "Danish cartoons" arguing that the protests were directed against "the West" in general. In rejecting Poststructuralist theories of representation Žižek's analysis seems to lose a certain edge as he claims, rather simplistically, that the West's discourse of multicultural respect is "fake" – hyperreal or simulated would be more appropriate terms in my opinion.
- 9) Baudrillard's use of the terms 'other' and 'Other' clearly owes much to Lacan, however Baudrillard's usage is distinctive. Baudrillard argues that the realm of the Imaginary implodes in the third order of the Code so the lower case other is a unit in the Code (or a simulation) rather than a product of the Imaginary as in Lacan. Concerning the upper case 'Other', again there is similarity. Baudrillard seems to reject Lacan's sense of the 'Big' Other as referring to language, law and representation – these

phenomena Baudrillard terms the Code. However the use of the upper case Other to refer to radical alterity, singularity or absolute uniqueness is also used by Lacan. I suspect both writers adapted the term from Hegel's *Phenomenology* where the term absolute otherness (*ganz andere*) appears, though their use of the term is probably mediated by the work of Georges Bataille, himself engaging with Alexandre Kojève's influential reading of Hegel.

10) Sophie Lancaster, 20, was murdered by five men in Lancashire, UK in August 2007, apparently for being a 'Goth' or looking 'different'. See News.BBC.co.uk.

11) Baudrillard's position was quite different from arguments concerning the 'new racism'. 'New racism' is said to describe a shift from overt 'biologically' based racism, to a covert one where ethnic minorities suffer from being positioned within social representations in subordinate or stereotypical ways: in short a 'cultural' discrimination. This problem can, the argument runs, be improved by more positive representations of the minority groups in question until, hopefully, discrimination and stereotyping disappear. For Baudrillard the problem is precisely this shift into reductive representational thinking which suggests that there can be a politically 'correct' use of representational signs. Indeed obvious and crude examples of racial stereotyping are disappearing. Where stereotypes exist they are very complex, as in forms of contemporary and alternative comedy where stereotypes appear but it is hard to tell whether they are being challenged, and who would be competent to judge this anyway? Sign-types are not merely stereotypes. Coded sign types encompass both the stereotype and the strategies used to counter stereotypes that produce multiple or pluralised stereotypes. While the impasse of politically correct representation reigns, more and more black teenagers die in the streets of UK cities.

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